

Stephanie Carroll



“The initials BC were historically associated with “Before Coffee” among my family and friends. I would never have imagined that today BC would be short for Breast Cancer. As I start to write my story, I am in awe when I look back at the past year... My name is Stephanie Carroll and I am a current Counseling Education and Supervision doctoral candidate in the Special Education, Rehabilitation, and Counseling department at Auburn University. Last year I wrote for the ALL IN, ALL PINK breast cancer story as a recent stage IV breast cancer fighter. Today I get to write my story as a recent SURVIVOR, as of 01-25-2014!

My journey started in January 2013 with back and hip pain that progressively increased during my spring semester in school. Pain so intense, that it eventually brought me to tears when I tried to move, walk, sit, and attempt daily activities. My worst fear at the time was the idea of back surgery. After a month of dozens of doctor’s appointments, abnormal scans, a breast and bone/bone marrow biopsies... I was told that I have stage IV breast cancer.

The “tumor” in my left breast was the size of a pea, but the cancer had metastasized to my bones - skull to femur and everywhere in between. I was a 32 year old, otherwise “healthy,” graduate student busy working, mentoring, teaching, counseling, and writing my dissertation, going 90 miles a minute. My whole world came crashing down around me in one split second. In a blink of an eye, I had to choose to either be engulfed by the fear associated with the reality of the “terminal statistics,” or dig deep down inside and face cancer head on... needless to say I chose the latter and began the fight of my life! Reality check: Cancer sucks! Losing all my hair sucks! Chemo (every other week from 7/31/2013 to 10/9/2013 and then every week until 3/2014) and the accompanying tons of medication sucks! Getting poked every week for blood draws from August to March sucks! Having a double mastectomy in July and going through the breast expansion phase (not pleasant) sucks! HOWEVER, cancer has brought me an amazing, incredible, indescribable journey that is difficult to even put into words.

Stephanie Carroll's story continued...

During the past year I decided to wake up every morning proclaiming "I AM HEALED." I went to chemo with a smile on my face (even if that was all the energy I had), I made myself get out of bed every day, even if it was just to eat or sit for an hour. I made sure to make each minute and hour of everyday have meaning and count. I made sure to laugh and cry, sometimes at the same time! I have grown insurmountably as a person. I found strength that I never thought I had. I found peace and serenity throughout life's storms that came, often without warning.

Most importantly I found my faith and relationship with God growing closer as each day passed. God is so much bigger than cancer. He made man, He made medicine, and He makes miracles...and I am living proof of His miracle! I could not have made this journey without the amazing support and love my mom and dad. Their sacrifices have created the rock on which I could stand during the many times when it seemed impossible to move forward. I am blessed to have relationships that have literally stood the test of time – the many groups of people that I have had the pleasure to worked with at Auburn University – the thoughts and prayers from family and friends all around the world – my survivor sisters that I have met who allowed me to break down and lean on them because they too have been there – my oncologist Dr. Elisabeth McKeen and all the staff for their hard work and dedication to the field of oncology medicine.

Today – I live life! Life is what you make of it and now I make the most of every day. This journey is only one chapter in my long life ahead of me. I have continued to pursue my Ph.D with the wonderful support of my advisor, committee members, and encouragement from my dissertation gals. I look forward to crossing the stage soon as Dr. Carroll and being a proud Auburn University Alumni. The Auburn creed continues to remind me that "... I believe in work, hard work; ... I believe in a spirit that is not afraid; ...and I walk humbly with my God" and I continue to fight as a survivor and cherish each moment I have here on earth!

